

REPORT OF THE CHAIRMAN OF THE RESERVE FORCES POLICY BOARD

Introduction

The Reserve Forces Policy Board, as the principal independent policy adviser to the Secretary of Defense for Reserve Component issues, is pleased to summarize our major activities, observations and recommendations for the 2002 Annual Defense Report.

The value and credibility of the Board rests in its civilian and military composition and the diversity of experience among its 24 members. The Board considers issues and initiatives concerning the National Guard and Reserve Components and provides timely and relevant policy advice to the Secretary of Defense and other DoD leaders. Board positions reflect a studied consideration of the needs of the services and the seven Reserve Components, and are intended to support and enhance a fully integrated Total Force and National Military Strategy.

History and Legal Basis of the Reserve Forces Policy Board

President Harry S. Truman planted the seed for what is now the Reserve Forces Policy Board (RFPB) when in 1947 he directed Secretary of Defense James Forrestal to begin a study of ways to strengthen the nation's reserve forces. This study grew into the Civilian Components Policy Board (CCPB) in 1949. The CCPB was renamed the Reserve Forces Policy Board by Secretary of Defense George Marshall, and its existence was codified by Congress in 1952.

Title 10, Section 10301, of the US Code states that the Reserve Forces Policy Board is the principal policy advisor on matters relating to the Reserve Components. Section 113 requires the Secretary of Defense to transmit to the President and the Congress a separate report from the Reserve Forces Policy Board covering Reserve Component programs and on any other matters the Board considers appropriate. Department of Defense Directive 5120.2 names the Board as an independent source of counsel concerning the Reserve Components.

Over the years, board membership has evolved to meet the needs of the Total Force. It is now made up of 24 members, including a civilian chairman appointed by the Secretary of Defense; the Assistant Secretaries of the Army, Navy and Air Force responsible for Reserve Components; a regular officer from each of the three Military Departments; the Director of the Joint Staff; a general officer from the active Marine Corps; two officers from each of the six Department of Defense Reserve Components plus two regular or Reserve officers of the Coast Guard; and a Reserve general or flag officer who serves without vote as the Military Executive to the Chairman and the Board.

The mission of the Reserve Forces Policy Board is to examine multi-service policy issues affecting the Reserve Components and/or their members as referred by the Secretary of Defense, other DoD officials, the Chairman, or any member of the Board. The Board also reviews recommendations referred to it by the various reserve policy committees and boards of the Military Departments and the Coast Guard.

Meeting Current and Future Challenges

Homeland Security

The Board was concerned with Reserve Component participation in the Homeland Security (HLS) mission long before the events of September 11. In early 2001, the Chairman of the Reserve Forces Policy Board formed an ad hoc committee of board members and advisers from outside the Board and charged them to examine all aspects of Reserve Component participation in the HLS mission. The ad hoc committee met three times before September 11, taking briefings from subject matter experts from DoD and other agencies. The Board's position at the time of the attack on the Pentagon and the World Trade Center Towers was that the HLS mission should not be assigned solely to any one Reserve Component, because this would be impractical and would limit the integration and interoperability of the Total Force. However, because of its scope, the Board held that the Guard and Reserve must be fully integrated into this important mission and that HLS should be elevated to the top of DoD's mission list, a position supported by the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness,

who, early on the morning of September 11, briefed the Board and alumni that Homeland Security had become the number one mission of the Department of Defense. Nearly three months later at a follow-up meeting, the Guard and Reserve directors and chiefs reinforced the Board's earlier position on Homeland Security and outlined their components' greatly expanded participation in the mission and contributions to national security since September 11.

Quadrennial Defense Review

In light of the new defense strategy and force planning construct developed during the QDR, Secretary of Defense Rumsfeld directed a comprehensive review of the Active and Reserve Component mix organization priority missions and associated resources. The Principal Deputy Assistant Secretary of Defense for Reserve Affairs invited the Board to provide its collective expertise to the effort and to help develop the study. As the Secretary's independent advisor on issues affecting Guard and Reserve Components, the Reserve Forces Policy Board anticipates participating in the process and reviewing and commenting on the final product.

Current Issues

The Reserve Forces Policy Board maintains a list of standing issues it monitors continually. Of the four most active in 2001, two are recurring and two reemerged in importance.

People and Health Care

For the first time in the history of the Reserve Forces Policy Board, Reserve Component directors and chiefs unanimously told the Board that they consider healthcare issues to be the number one obstacle to seamless integration. Traditionally, Guard and Reserve personnel receive medical care or treatment only while in drill status or on orders, but their families do not unless the sponsor is ordered to duty for more than 30 days. As medical costs rise, health insurance and healthcare benefits take on greater importance. Military healthcare benefits for reservists and their families are now eligible for TRICARE for life health benefits. Additionally, under FY 2002 National Defense Authorization Act, activated reservists who are

employed by the federal government can opt to continue their Federal Employee Health Benefit for themselves and their families. A number of private sector employees and state governments now provide similar healthcare options.

However, some civilian employers may choose to disenroll reservist-employees from their healthcare plans after about two weeks of active duty, effectively canceling their civilian health insurance when reservists are called up for extended periods. In the past, these reservists and their families often endured a thirty-day waiting period after they returned to work before they could re-enroll in a company healthcare plan. The TRICARE transitional healthcare benefit now fills this gap by providing coverage until the civilian plan takes effect.

Recapitalization and Modernization

Modernization of Reserve Component equipment is another perennial Board issue. The key to a viable and fully integrated Total Force is complete interoperability. This is not possible if Guard and Reserve units do not modernize concurrently with their active duty counterparts. Technology is expensive and many interoperability issues these days are the result of Reserve Component units being equipped with hardware that is older or less capable than that used by the active force. This hand-me-down ideology is a remnant of a Cold War strategy that relied on the Guard and Reserve to be a force in reserve rather than an active participant in the National Military Strategy. Today we find Guard and Reserve units forward deployed overseas for long periods of time, often in combat and either intermixed with active units or replacing them altogether. If the equipment these units bring with them is not interoperable with that used by the active force or by other reserve units, their effectiveness declines rapidly and they become limited in the missions they can be assigned. These are missions Reserve Component units could otherwise readily accomplish were it not for the limitations imposed by their equipment. While the services have made an effort to incorporate Guard and Reserve requirements into their procurement requests, low priorities hamper funding for upgrades and improvements in reserve-owned equipment.

The National Guard and Reserve Equipment Account (NGREA) helped the Reserve Components meet their modernization needs for nearly a decade. NGREA funding has declined steadily in recent years after DoD reiterated that each of the Services is responsible for funding the equipment needs of its Reserve Component. Declining budgets made the tenets of this directive impractical, and modernization within the Reserve Components has lagged. Although it appears there will be a significant increase in NGREA in FY 2002, the Board continues to monitor closely the status of the NGREA account. The Board voted in May 2001 to work to influence directly Reserve Component modernization efforts, particularly in how they are affected by NGREA funding. On a similar note, while it may be fiscally difficult to fund 100 percent of the modernization requirements for all services, the Board has noted that maintaining so-called legacy equipment, a term used to describe equipment approaching obsolescence, is expensive as well. Since this equipment usually is no longer supported by the active forces, repair parts are expensive and become difficult to procure. The services no longer provide technical schools to train the Guard and Reserve personnel who will use it, forcing the Reserve Components to develop and fund this training themselves. Additionally, Reserve Component personnel who are qualified on legacy equipment cannot be assigned to Active Component units with more modern equipment without undergoing additional expensive and time consuming training.

Efficiencies and Innovation

In the aftermath of the mobilization for Operations Noble Eagle and Enduring Freedom, the Board agreed that the mobilization process needs to be reviewed because many of the lessons learned from Operation Desert Storm have been forgotten or no longer apply.

Full Time Support. Full time support has long been an issue for the RFPB. Some of the Reserve Components provide more attention to this issue than others. Senior Reserve Component leaders agree that the amount of full-time support personnel available to any given Reserve Component unit directly affects that unit's readiness, recruiting, and retention. More full time support equals higher readiness ratings. In most cases, the components have significantly more validated requirements than are authorized or funded by their services. The standing position of the Board on this issue is

that Reserve Component full time support end strength should be authorized and funded to meet the mission requirements of each component.

Common Access Card. In an effort to modernize and streamline the mobilization process, the Secretary of Defense directed the RFPB in 1996 to assist in developing a so-called “smart card” that would reduce both the time and the administrative paperwork necessary to mobilize and deploy Guard and Reserve personnel. These cards, now called the Common Access Card, were issued to all services in large numbers for the first time in 2001. However, the Board holds that the current card does not meet the joint warfighting requirements initially outlined by the gaining Commanders-in-Chief. Very little of the personal, medical, and military information the CINCs asked for is stored in the current card. Most of its capacity is devoted to providing secure universal access to DoD buildings, facilities, and information systems. The Board does not accept as cost or mission effective the current policy to issue a new card to Guard and Reserve personnel each time they change duty status, and it will continue its efforts in the coming year to return the focus of this important tool to mobilization rather than access.

Family Readiness. Active duty military planners often to do not realize that many Guard and Reserve families do not live close to a major active military installation and are not immersed in daily military life. Often, spouses of mobilized and deployed Guard and Reserve personnel are not familiar with the privileges, benefits, and responsibilities associated with active duty. Many live at some distance from major installations and cannot easily attend classes or briefings. At least one Reserve Component chief advocated Board involvement in changing the Joint Travel Regulation to allow Guard and Reserve unit commanders the leeway to use official funds or assets to transport spouses and families of mobilized personnel to the unit for important briefings and to accomplish necessary administrative actions, such as issuing new identification cards.

Timely Orders and Pay. It is usually the rule rather than the exception that Guard and Reserve personnel receive their orders less than thirty days before deployment. This makes planning and timely employer notification difficult at a time when employers deserve as much predictability as

possible. Timely pay for mobilized and deployed reservists continues to be a concern for the Board.

Board Activities

Studies and Symposia

The Reserve Forces Policy Board routinely sponsors and conducts studies and symposia in order to glean information and explore issues that impact the Reserve Components. Most recently, the Board completed a study to determine how the Total Force Policy fits within the new national security environment and to identify changes necessary to meet emerging future requirements. Although the basic tenets of the Total Force Policy have remained largely unchanged since the end of the Cold War, there has been a fundamental shift in the way in which the Total Force is utilized. Reserve forces have a greater role in contingency operations, a greater overseas presence, and were heavily involved in Homeland Security operations even before September 11. None of this was envisioned for the Total Force in 1973. The report includes academic research, interviews with subject matter experts, and a workshop involving senior leaders. It was completed late in 2001 and recommended a number of steps to increase the effectiveness of the Total Force across a spectrum of activities necessary to meet the demands of the 21st century.

Identified as a barrier to total integration of reserve forces into the Total Force, a lack of knowledge and understanding of the Reserve Components was the catalyst behind a Total Force education summit tasked to the Board by the Secretary of Defense in 1999. The Board conducted a DoD education summit at the Army War College later that year, resulting in a landmark Secretary of Defense memo on the Total Force Education Policy. In it, the Secretary states that more effective education is the key to integration, efficiency, and understanding, and called on the Services to enact measures to create a proper environment for educating all members on the Total Force. As of the end of CY 2001, attempts by the Services to comply with the Secretary's memorandum have fallen dormant.

Board Visits to Field Units

In an effort to stay abreast of the needs of the Commanders-in-Chief of the various unified and combatant commands, Board members visit several CINCs each year on a rotating basis. Several members of the Board visited U.S. Space Command in March 2001 and U.S. Transportation Command in July 2001. The Military Executive to the Chairman represented the Board at Bright Star in Egypt in October 2001 and several staff members traveled separately to various bases, posts, armories, and other locations to collect unit-specific or locally focused information. In all cases, findings were reported to the Board and evaluated for possible Board action.

CINCs and other senior leaders readily admit that they do not have the numbers of Guard and Reserve personnel working for them that they would like or can put to use. They say that they prefer to have direct, unlimited access to Reserve Component personnel and would maximize their use if the funding were available. Senior leaders told the Board that they have become very dependent upon Reserve Component manpower and that they have many times more requirements for Guard and Reserve personnel than they have resources to cover.

Board Meetings

The Reserve Forces Policy Board meets four times a year. In 2001, the Board met in the Washington, DC, area to conduct business in February, May, September, and November. The yearly Alumni and Board meeting scheduled for September 11 was canceled shortly after the attack on the Pentagon.

Conclusion

Just over a decade ago, the Guard and Reserve forces of the United States found them participating in Operation Desert Storm at levels not much greater than those experienced today. In fact, high operational and personnel tempo have been common throughout the Reserve Component for a number of years. It is obvious that the men and women of the Guard and Reserve want to serve—the Board found recently that recruiting and

retention have remained fairly constant across the services. In fact, the Air Force Reserve executed 101 percent of its end strength in 2001, as well as meeting its recruiting goals for the first time in a long time. Members of the Guard and Reserve also strongly support a fully integrated Total Force. People who are working hard at what they were trained to do always have the highest morale. The men and women of the Guard and Reserve volunteered to serve their country and stand ready to do it. Leaders often tell the Board that their Guard and Reserve people can do anything and are among the best they have. The Reserve Forces Policy Board wholeheartedly supports seamless integration in the Total Force, and in the coming years will continue its role as the independent policy advisor on Reserve Component matters.